

Presentation by the UK chairperson of the OSCE Security Committee



PUBLISHED DEC 17, 2020
BY [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

I am very grateful for the opportunity to brief the Permanent Council after almost a year as Chairperson of the Security Committee. I will split my remarks in three parts: (i) the intention at the beginning of the year; (ii) the Security Committee meetings themselves throughout 2020; and (iii) the Ministerial Council and the end of the year.

Rewinding the clock, and in much different circumstances earlier this year, I briefed the Permanent Council on my intentions and ambitions for the Security Committee in support of the Albanian Chair-in-Office.

I said back in February that I would focus on the Chairpersonship's priority topics of transnational organised crime, preventing and countering terrorism and VERLT, and cybersecurity.

I emphasised back then my belief in the potential of the Security Committee and my intention to revitalise it as an inclusive, dynamic platform for discussion with practical, technical-level dialogue and debate making the most of experts, Voluntary Reports and with the stronger involvement of the OSCE field missions.

That vision for the Committee back in early 2020 was informed by the views of participating States: we held an informal Security Committee meeting in February for Vienna-based experts, and that provided an opportunity for input on our approach and the programme for the year.

I wanted to say thank you for your support – all of you – in meeting that intention. Despite relying on a virtual or blended format, the willingness of your delegations to move away from pre-prepared statements and your efforts to engage directly with the invited speakers, has in my view allowed us to dig a lot

deeper on issues of common interest.

To the meetings themselves, where I have 7 more detailed reflections.

First - Your participation, from Vienna based colleagues and from capitals, across all our meetings has in my view been excellent. Each of our thematic meetings had at least one voluntary report from participating States – and most meetings had significantly more than that.

Second – the involvement of your capital-based experts was far higher than I could have originally anticipated. And this was one of the unexpected consequence of the virtual/blended format of meetings.

Third - We had field missions speaking at virtually all of our thematic Security Committee meetings, which I thought brought a unique and valuable perspective from their work on the ground – connecting it to practical elements within the OSCE's structures.

Fourth – in these meetings, we strived for gender balance. And I'm pleased to say that 46 per cent of the expert contributors to our Security Committee meetings this year were women – which is invaluable in providing us with a complete and holistic picture of how we can best prevent and combat transnational threats.

Fifth - We included a range of speakers, including from the public and private sectors; international organisations; civil society; think tanks and academia – which I believe bringing all these together exceeded a diversity of perspectives.

Sixth – Due to COVID-19, there were activities that I had envisaged at the start of the year which unfortunately simply were not. That included an intention to undertake a Security Committee trip to an OSCE field mission, and to hold meetings in a range of different formats.

But, in spite of the challenge of the pandemic, and with significant support from the Secretariat, the Chairpersonship and from participating States, the Security Committee was able to manoeuvre and shift to fully virtual and then blended meetings. With only a couple of postponements during the year, we were able to ensure the delivery of our full programme of meetings as envisaged at the beginning of this year as well as a special

meeting devoted to the impact of the pandemic on transnational threats.

Seventh - We heard from our range of speakers that transnational threats were and are complex, multi-faceted, and ever evolving. They are transnational in their nature, and this means no state can effectively combat them alone. We require cooperation. This required cooperation utilises domestic and international partnerships. And makes the most of our unique OSCE platform and niche added value. So there is utility in working together to implement our commitments in the field of transnational threats.

Now moving to the end of the year, although the Committee did not achieve consensus on a CT deliverable this year, I am delighted that, thanks to your flexibility and constructive approach, we were able to reach consensus at the Ministerial Council on adopting the Declaration on Strengthening Cooperation in Countering Transnational Organized Crime at the Ministerial Council. This was the first text on organised crime as a holistic topic since 2006.

This declaration is positive. It shows our collective will to refocus our attention on combatting organised crime, and will serve as a foundation for future work within the OSCE area to this area.

To the Albanian Chair, I would like to thank you wholeheartedly for your trust and confidence throughout the year and your support. It has been an absolute pleasure to work with you. I would also like to commend my terrific team for their incredible support throughout.

And to conclude, we are of course an organisation of 57 participating States, and each State understandably has unique views and perspectives.

But I would really like to thank you for the approach that you all brought both to our thematic meetings and negotiating sessions. Thanks to your mutual respect, restraint and positive approach, we were able to collectively agree on the first Ministerial Council deliverable in the Security Committee since 2016, and have some very fruitful discussions throughout the year in key elements to help combat and prevent transnational threats. There have been a number of occasions throughout the year – including the CT incident here in Vienna – which have shown the importance of tackling these threats in the OSCE area collectively.

Thank you once again for your support to me and my team throughout the year.

Press release distributed by Media Pigeon on behalf of GOV.UK, on Dec 17, 2020. For more information subscribe and follow us.

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